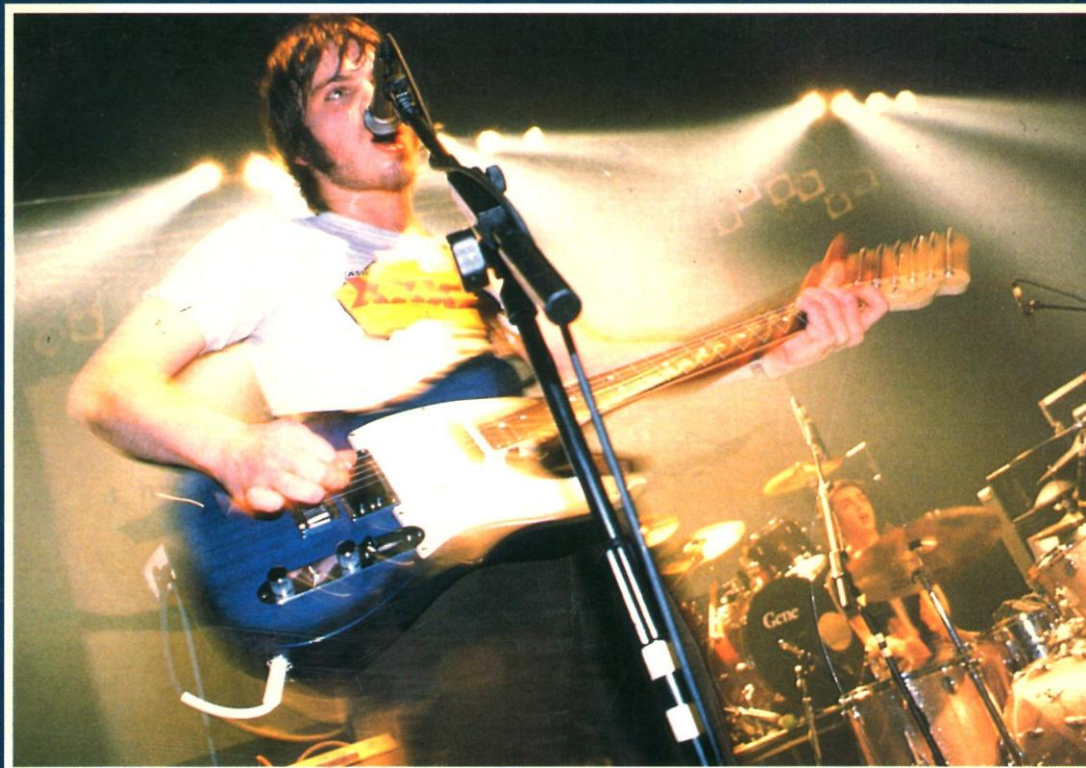


Factfiles



FORTY YEARS OF POP

Steve Flinders

OXFORD BOOKWORMS 2

1 What is pop?

In 1956, a young man from the south of the United States made a record called *Heartbreak Hotel*. The young man was Elvis Presley. Eight million people bought his record and it went straight to number one in the US charts. It was the first of many hits for Elvis and it was also one of the first modern pop records.

'Pop' is popular music: the music of the people. There has always been popular music, but pop was born around the time that Elvis began singing – more than forty years ago. Pop songs are about girls and boys, going out, dancing, having a good time, being in love and being out of love. Pop is for the young. It is about growing up and about not growing up. It is about feeling

different. Pop tells you it is OK to feel the way you do. Pop can be happy or sad. It can be strange, it can be

fun, it can be dangerous. For the people who work in the pop business, it is usually about making money. For most people, it is about having a good time. Pop is for now.



Pop can be fun: Roy Wood

Most pop doesn't mean very much. And yet, now and then, pop says something important in a beautiful way. There are some songs and sounds which speak to everyone. This book tells you about some of the great stars and the great sounds of pop during the last forty years.



Pop can be strange: Alice Cooper

2 The fifties

So how did it all begin?

Forty years ago in the United States, there were already many different kinds of popular music: black music, white music, and gospel, the music of the church.

America was rich. Young people had jobs. They had money to buy radios and to listen to the new records. They had money to buy electric guitars. They began to play the new music: R and B – rhythm and blues, and rock and roll.

Elvis

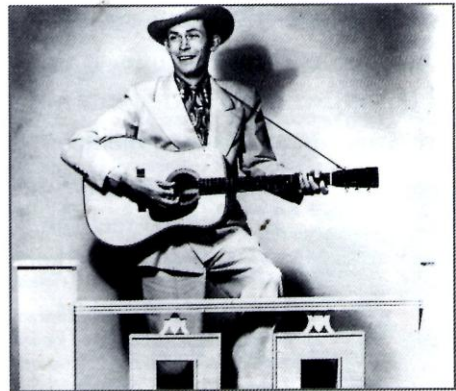
Elvis Presley listened to these different kinds of music when he

was a boy. Presley was born in 1935 in Tupelo, Mississippi. He came from a poor white family. When he was a boy, he heard gospel music in his parents' church and he heard black people playing R and B. He made his first record in 1954 and in 1956 he had his first number one hit: *Heartbreak Hotel*. Suddenly he was famous and he was rich. He looked good, he was a great singer and he was different. Girls liked him. Boys wanted to be like him.

Before Elvis, most young people were like their mothers



Black music: John Lee Hooker



White music: Hank Williams

and fathers. They wore the same clothes, they did the same things. After Elvis, everything changed. Young people wanted to be different. They wanted different clothes. They had different music. Elvis was the first star of rock and roll, the first pop star.

Presley's later life was not so happy. He made some bad records and bad films. In the seventies he sang in Las Vegas, but he had problems with drugs and died in 1977. Today, millions still remember him and still call him the King – the King of Rock and Roll. Since the 1950s, there



Girls liked Elvis

have been many stars of pop and many different kinds of music. But in the 1950s, one man more than any other changed pop music: Elvis. He was the man who, more than any other, started the story of pop.

Sounds of the fifties

Listen to singles from Elvis like: *Heartbreak Hotel*, *Jailhouse Rock*, *Hound Dog*, *Love Me Tender*. And to the records of other great names from the 1950s: Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Eddie Cochran.



Gospel music

3 The sixties (1): the USA

Some people call the sixties a golden time for pop. Pop became a voice for millions of young people and it became big business. And many different kinds of pop came from the rock and roll of the fifties.



The Beach Boys go surfing

One new kind, from California, was the surfing sound of the Beach Boys: the most successful American group of the sixties. Brian Wilson wrote most of their songs (*God Only Knows*, *Sloop John B*, *Good Vibrations*). He was always trying to do new things with his music. In 1995, a British pop magazine asked a

group of (older!) British pop music writers to name the best pop album of all time: their number one? – Brian Wilson's *Pet Sounds*.

In Detroit (Motown, the city of the motor car), there was the black soul music of Marvin Gaye and Otis Redding; here too, the record producer, Phil Spector, was building something he called the Wall of Sound with mainly black singers, like Ike and Tina Turner (*River Deep*, *Mountain High*) and girl groups like The Ronettes.



Motown: The Supremes

And there was also the completely different voice of Bob Dylan, who started as a folk singer, then changed to an electric guitar in 1966. He wrote some of the best songs in modern music like *All along the Watchtower*, *Mr Tambourine Man* and *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*. Dylan showed that pop music can be exciting and serious.

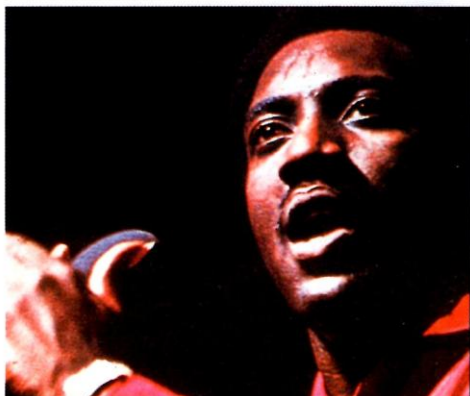
The 1960s was a time when many young people believed that sex and drugs and rock music (the kind of music which came straight from the rock and roll and rhythm and blues of the fifties) would give love and peace to the world. They listened to the psychedelic music of groups like The Grateful Dead and of Jimi

Hendrix, one of the great guitarists of rock. More than 300,000 people went to the Woodstock Festival in 1969 to listen to this kind of music. But this was the year that Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones died because of drugs. One year later, Hendrix also died from drugs. And a young man was killed while The Rolling Stones played at a concert in Altamont, California. It was the end of the dream.

Sounds of the sixties (USA)

Listen to the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*; Bob Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited*; Jimi Hendrix's *Are You Experienced?*; Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*; The Velvet Underground and Nico's *The Velvet Underground*.

Otis Redding



Bob Dylan



4 The sixties (2): the UK

In the 1950s, many pop stars tried to be like Elvis. But the 1960s was a time of big changes for the young people of the rich world. They had more money and they were freer. Pop music changed too. Most of the new music came from the USA, but the sixties was also a golden time for pop in the UK. Two of the groups which changed pop music most were English: the Beatles and The Rolling Stones.

The Beatles

The Beatles were John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George

Harrison, and Ringo Starr. They were from Liverpool. Two years after their first record in 1962, they were the most famous group in the world: in March 1964, Beatles' records had the top five places in the US charts. The whole world seemed to go crazy about the Beatles: not just about their music, but about their clothes, their hair, the way they talked. Their music was full of a new kind of energy and Lennon and McCartney wrote great songs, always trying to do new things.

Between 1963 and 1969, The Beatles had eighteen number one hits in the UK. But they stopped playing in front of people in 1966. After that they only made records. Then they started to disagree, and they stopped working together completely in 1970. In 1980, a man killed John Lennon in a street in New York, so the Beatles can never play a concert together again. But the

The Beatles. Their clothes, their hair were different



Beatles' music will always live. The Beatles gave something new and exciting to pop.

The Rolling Stones

Young people and old liked the Beatles, but the Rolling Stones, from London, were the bad boys of rock. They didn't smile, they looked angry. They had problems with the police because of drugs. The music of the Stones was angry too. Their singer, Mick Jagger, and guitarist, Keith Richard, wrote some of the great songs of rock: songs like *I Can't Get No Satisfaction* and *Sympathy for the Devil*. They made their first record in 1962



The Rolling Stones: the bad boys of rock



Their songs will last

and they are still playing today. Now they are very rich. Their music is not as strong as it was thirty years ago. But millions – young and old – still go to see them. They call themselves 'the greatest rock and roll band in the world'.

Sounds of the sixties (UK)

Listen to The Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper* and *Revolver*; The Rolling Stones' *Beggars Banquet* and *Let It Bleed*; The Who's *Who is Better, Who is Best*; The Kinks' *Collection*; Cream's *Disraeli Gears*.

5 The seventies

Progressive rock and heavy metal

In the early seventies, pop music started to get boring. There were not so many new and interesting sounds. Two of the more interesting kinds of pop were progressive rock and heavy metal.

Progressive rock, played by groups like Pink Floyd and Genesis, came from the psychedelic music of the sixties. Pink Floyd played long concerts with big light shows. Led Zeppelin, started in 1968 with singer Jimmy Page and guitarist Robert Plant, was both a progressive group and the first



Progressive: Pink Floyd

hard rock or heavy metal group. Heavy metal is very loud rock music.

Punk and the Sex Pistols

Things were different in the USA. In New York, bands like The Stooges and The New York Dolls were making a new, stronger kind of music. They wore strange new clothes: it was called the glam look. They wanted to wake people up. This was the start of punk – the music of the seventies.

In the US, punk was just another kind of music. But in Britain, when John Lydon changed his name to Johnny



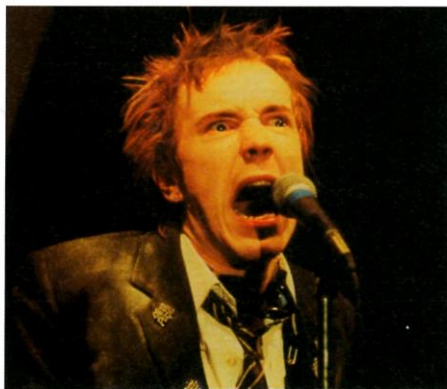
Heavy metal: Led Zeppelin

Rotten and joined The Sex Pistols in 1975 (John Beverley – Sid Vicious – joined in 1976), young people immediately knew that this was different, the most different thing since the Beatles. Their music was loud and unmusical. But that didn't matter. Punk music was ugly because life was ugly. It was angry because there was a lot to be angry about: many young people were poor, many did not have jobs. Punk was very different from the love and peace of the sixties. For the punks, there was No Future.

But the Pistols were stars for only three years. In 1978, Sid Vicious killed his girlfriend. A few months later, he too was dead from drugs. It was not the end of punk, but it was the end for the Pistols.

Disco

And yet, as so often in pop, another completely different kind of music was also popular at the same time: disco. In 1977, a film called *Saturday Night Fever*, about disco life and disco



Johnny Rotten

dancing, with music from the Bee Gees, made disco the most popular music of the time. While many young people were still listening to punk bands like The Clash, the new international sound was the music of groups like The Bee Gees and the Swedish group, Abba.

Sounds of the seventies

Listen to Abba's *Gold – Greatest Hits*; David Bowie's *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust*; Led Zeppelin's *Led Zeppelin IV*; Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*; The Sex Pistols' *Here's the Sex Pistols*; Stevie Wonder's *Innervisions*.

6 The eighties



Culture Club

New pop

The new pop of the early eighties was 'new' mainly because it was not like punk. Some New Wave music had a punk sound, but it was not the angry sound of the Sex Pistols. A lot of it was like old pop, with bands like Blondie singing simple three-minute songs again. And New Romantics like Duran Duran and Culture Club were not angry either. Pop was big business, and pop stars were business people as well as musicians, interested in selling records and making money.

But there were differences. There were new sounds made by

computers and synthesizers (see pages 14–15). Pop was becoming more and more international: young people in Japan were now spending more money on records than in any country outside the USA. And the new superstars of the eighties were also different. Before, most stars were white men. In the eighties, one of the biggest stars was black. The other was a woman.

Michael Jackson

The biggest superstar of the eighties was Michael Jackson. Michael Jackson was already a star when he was six, making hit records with his brothers in The

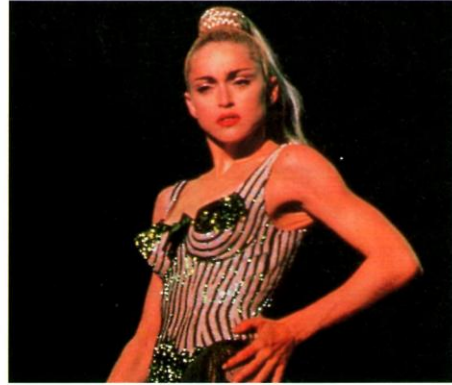
Michael Jackson



Jackson Five. When he was older, he made more hits. He was a wonderful dancer: he had a new dance called the Moonwalk. Pop videos were becoming almost as important as pop records and Jackson's videos were new and exciting. He was also a clever businessman. He was already rich when he bought the Beatles' songs and these made him even richer. By the end of the eighties, Jackson was the richest star in pop. His life was very different from the life of most people. He lived alone in a big house, with animals and children as his friends. Michael Jackson is still making hit records, but it is now more difficult for him to be as popular as he was in the eighties.

Madonna

The other eighties superstar was Madonna. Madonna, more than any woman singer before, decided what she did and controlled what she did. She, too, was a very good dancer and, like Michael Jackson, her music was loud, fast, exciting disco music. She said that sex was



Madonna in control

an important way for women to be free. And in her videos, which helped the songs to do well, Madonna often showed herself in control of men. Thousands of people went to see her; she made films; she was always on TV. Madonna showed the way to other women in pop and many are now following.

Sounds of the eighties

Listen to Michael Jackson's *Thriller*; Prince's *Purple Rain*; Madonna's *The Immaculate Collection*; Public Enemy's *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back*; U2's *The Joshua Tree*.

7 The nineties

Rap

The most important new music of the nineties was rap. Black music has always been important to the story of pop. The rock and roll of the fifties came from black music. In the sixties, American blacks made soul music and Motown. In the seventies, Bob Marley and the Wailers from Jamaica gave reggae to the world and became international stars. In the eighties, funk was the black bridge between rock and disco.

Rap was not new in the nineties: it started in New York twenty years before. But by the early nineties, one in five records bought in the US was rap. It was the most important kind of new music since punk.

Rap is different because rappers talk more than they sing. They speak their words fast over music, which can come from live musicians or from a DJ (disc jockey) taking sounds from different records. Rap, like punk



Rap: Public Enemy

in the seventies, was the music of the city streets, and the words were about life on the city streets. Rap changed pop in the nineties as much as punk did in the seventies.

World music

By the nineties, music was international big business. Groups were now playing and selling records all over the world. And new styles of music were coming from all over the world – Salsa from Latin America, Highlife and Afrobeat from West Africa, Township Pop from South Africa and many more.



Many kinds of pop

Grunge

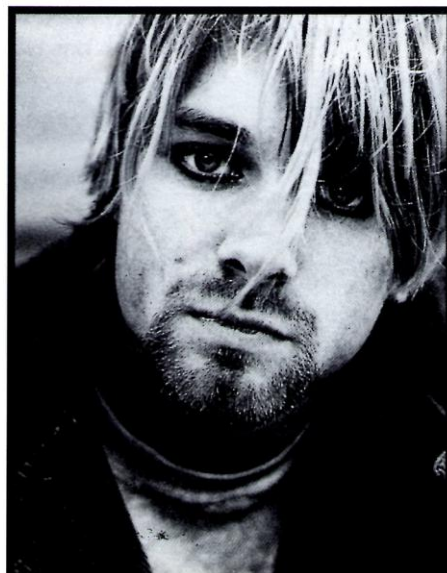
The feeling of danger is not just in rap. There is a dark feeling to other kinds of music of the nineties, a feeling which comes from the danger in the streets,

Kurt Cobain, died 1994

and the danger of AIDS. Grunge music, from Seattle in the United States, wanted to go back to the music of rock and roll, and to talk about these feelings. This is perhaps why the death of Kurt Cobain of Nirvana was so important to young people at this time. These were the things he sang about and which he seemed to understand before he killed himself.

Sounds of the nineties

Listen to Nirvana's *Nevermind*; R.E.M.'s *Automatic for the People*; Soul to Soul's *Club Classics Volume 2*; Ice Cube's *The Predator*.



8 The changing sound of pop



The album covers were interesting, too

In the fifties, records like Elvis's *Heartbreak Hotel* were singles: they had just one song on the A side (and another on the B side). The record itself was made of vinyl. In the sixties, records were still made of vinyl, but the album or LP (*long playing record*) became more important. An album usually had ten to fifteen

songs on it. Because albums were bigger, the covers had pictures and photos on them. So the sixties was a golden time, not just for pop, but for pop pictures.

The sound was changing too. In the fifties making a record was simple. But as the technology changed, it got longer, and more expensive. In the sixties, musicians started to use a machine called a synthesizer, a kind of electronic piano which made many different sounds. Today, computers are very important. Sequencers can make the sounds of other musical instruments. And samplers can take any sound or any part of any other record and make it into part of a new sound or a new song. Many of the best-selling sounds of the nineties are not made by pop groups, but by DJs (disc jockeys) and samplers working with all the sounds from forty years of pop. In the early eighties, the CD (compact disc)



DJ Killerman Jaro: the music of the nineties



From the single to the LP to the CD

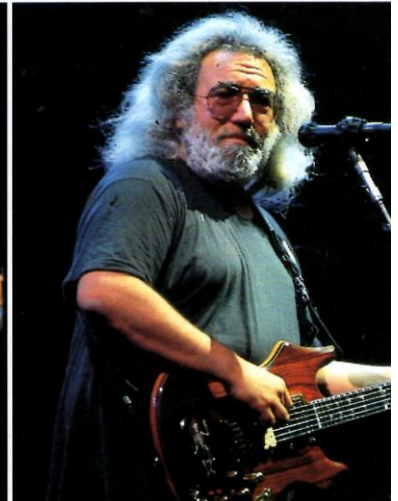
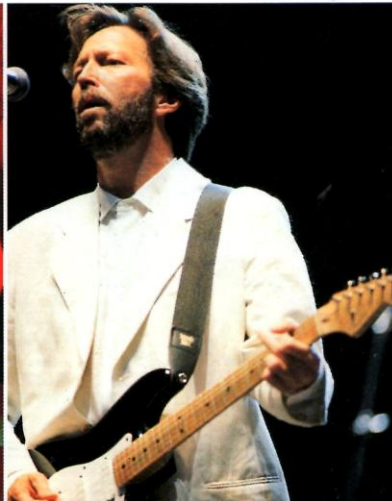
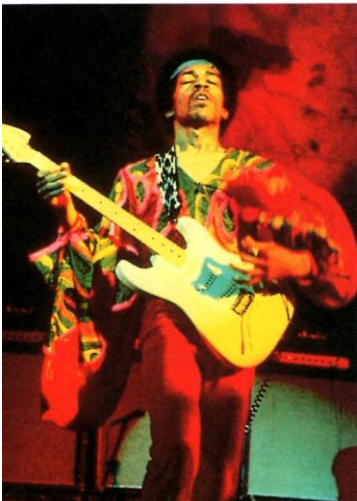
started to become more important than the LP, and now record companies do not make LPs. CDs give a very clean sound and the sound stays good for longer. Because of the CD, there is also a new interest in the early years of

pop. The old records of the sixties are now in the shops again, this time as CDs, so the young people of today can buy and listen to the pop from any time.

The guitar

Pop music is made in many different ways but *the* musical instrument of pop is still the electric guitar. There have been many great guitar players since pop was born. Three of the best are Jimi Hendrix: the great guitarist of rock; Eric Clapton: the great guitarist of the blues; Jerry Garcia: guitarist with the Grateful Dead, for thirty years the most popular live band in the US.

Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton and Jerry Garcia



9 Listening to pop

You're standing in the dark.
You've been waiting a long time.
You can't see anything. It's hot.
The place is full of people. You
need air. But it's exciting. And
then a loud voice says: 'It's time,
everybody – they're here!'



And the band begins to play ...

Suddenly the lights are on and the place is full of sound. There are four people on the stage – three with guitars and one behind the drums. And the band begins to play. The noise is very loud.

Some people in the crowd are jumping up and down. The music gets louder and louder. Coloured lights move fast round the stage

and across the crowd. Now everyone is dancing.

You feel very happy, you feel outside yourself. But then the music stops, the place is dark again. The people call for more but the band has gone. They are tired. People start to leave. You see your friends.

'They were good tonight.'

'They were great.'

'Let's go home.'

'They were really great.'

This is the pop concert: one of the best ways to get the real feeling of pop music is going to a live concert. Many smaller concerts now are not so very



Rave: music you can dance to

different to the ones of twenty or thirty years ago. There have also been some very big concerts. Two of the biggest and the most important pop concerts were:

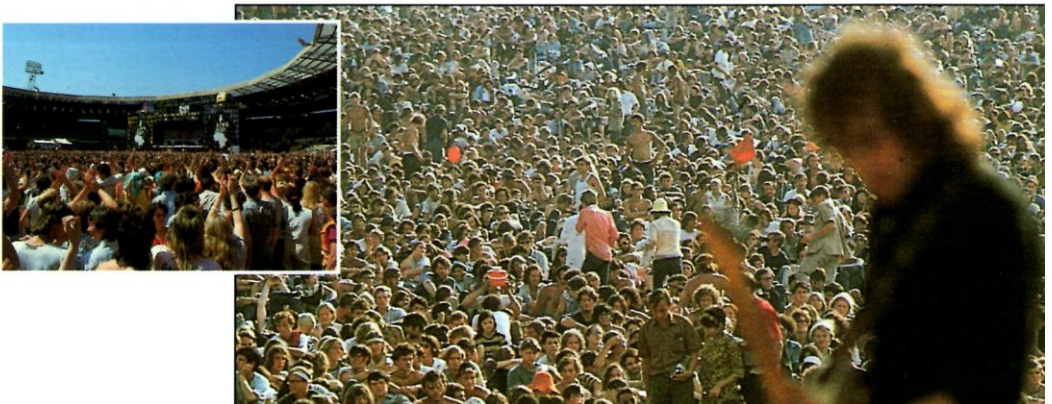
- The Woodstock Festival in New York State in 1969, a three-day concert with more than 300,000 people and the best American bands of the time.

- The Live Aid concert of 1985, which happened at the same time in London and Philadelphia, and was watched on television by millions of people all over the world. They gave more than £40 million to help the poor of Africa. Live Aid changed the way many older people feel about pop.

But just as the sound of pop is changing, so is the way we listen

to pop. For most of the time, singers and musicians have been the most important people in pop. But today, DJs, samplers and the machines they work with to make new sounds, are just as important. Raves, which began in England in the early nineties, are like big parties where thousands of young people go to dance all night to different kinds of non-stop house music like techno and jungle. This music is made by computer, it is very fast – 180 beats a minute – and usually has no words. For many young people today, the best kind of music is rave music, music which makes you feel happy, music you can dance to.

*Great pop happenings:
Live Aid 1985 and Woodstock 1969*



10 Pop today – and tomorrow

Today, pop is for everyone. When Elvis made *Heartbreak Hotel* and *Jailhouse Rock*, pop did not have a past and pop was for the young. Forty years later, the grandfathers of pop – the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Elton John – are now the first old people to make pop music: and old people as well as young listen to it.

Today, pop is everywhere. It is in the street, in the big shops, at the airport. You can get pop twenty-four hours a day on your radio, from your Walkman, from the TV. MTV (Music Television) goes to more than 250 million homes in 60 countries, all

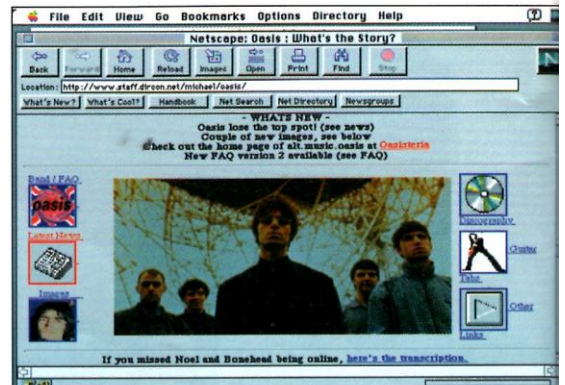
watching pop videos of all kinds of music. But MTV has not made pop the same everywhere. MTV Asia is not the same as MTV in Latin America. Today, more than ever, you can choose your own kind of music from many different kinds.

Today pop is big business. People spend 35 billion dollars on records every year. Two in every three records in the world come from just five companies. These companies are very rich. They help the bands whose records they can sell, but not always the bands whose music is good. They can decide who will be a star.

Peter Gabriel: now he's on computer



Read about your favourite band on the Internet



Techno: The Orb*Enjoy some of the great sounds of pop*

Today you can get pop from your computer. You can buy a CD-ROM which gives you the words of 550 of Bob Dylan's songs; you can see him play and hear him sing – on your computer. On pop CD-ROMs, you can listen to the music and you can change it: make it faster or slower, happier or sadder, use the sounds of different musical instruments.

Today you can get pop through your computer on the Internet. You can read the latest news about some bands, ask for and pay for a new record, and get the

music through the Internet into your computer.

And next time you go dancing, not just the music, but the pictures on the walls, moving in time with the music, could come from computers. The technoartist works at the side of the music DJ.

These are some of the new things in pop. But many things stay the same. Reading about pop is fine, but now, why don't you put on a record or go to a concert and listen to some of the great sounds of pop for yourself. Or pick up a guitar and make some.

Exercises

A Checking your understanding

The Fifties *How much can you remember? Check your answers.*

- 1 When was Elvis born?
- 2 What was the name of his first hit?
- 3 Where did he sing in the seventies?

The Sixties (1): The USA *Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?*

- 1 Brian Wilson wrote songs for The Beach Boys.
- 2 Bob Dylan changed to an electric guitar in 1963.
- 3 Brian Wilson died of drugs in 1969.

The Sixties (2): The UK *Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?*

- 1 The Beatles' first record was in 1962.
- 2 The Beatles were from London.
- 3 The Beatles had eighteen number one hits between 1963 and 1969.

The Seventies *Find answers to these questions.*

- 1 What kind of music did Pink Floyd play?
- 2 What kind of music did Led Zeppelin play?
- 3 What kind of music did The Sex Pistols play?

The Eighties *How much can you remember? Check your answers.*

- 1 Who was the biggest superstar of the eighties?
- 2 What was the name of his new dance?
- 3 How old was he when he was first a star?

The Nineties *Find answers to these questions.*

- 1 Where does Highlife come from?
- 2 What is the most important music of the nineties?
- 3 Which American city did Nirvana come from?

B Working with language

1 *Put together the beginnings and endings of these sentences. Check your answers on pages 14 and 15.*

- 1 In the sixties, records were still made of vinyl ...
- 2 Because albums were bigger, the covers had pictures on them ...
- 3 The CD started to become more important than the LP ...
- 4 Many sounds of the nineties are not made by pop groups at all ...
- 5 ... and now record companies do not make LPs.
- 6 ... but the album or LP became more important.
- 7 ... but by DJs and samplers working with all the sounds from the last forty years of pop.
- 8 ... and so the sixties was a golden time for pop pictures.

2 *Complete these sentences. Check your answers on pages 18 and 19.*

- 1 MTV (Music Television) goes to ...
- 2 People spend ...
- 3 Two in every three records in the world ...
- 4 Next time you go dancing, not just the music ...

C Activities

- 1 Write a short report on why you like (or don't like) pop music.
- 2 Write a story about a boy or girl who becomes a famous pop star.

D Project work

Write a short history of a singer or a band that you like a lot.

Glossary

AIDS a killer illness which people get through sex or blood

band a pop group

beat the sound in a piece of music which you move your feet or your body to when you listen; you can count three or four main beats in most pieces of music

bought past tense of 'to buy'

chart a list of the best-selling records of the week

concert when a singer or a group make music in front of a lot of people

company a business which sells something to make money

crazy if you are crazy about something, you like it a lot and you think about it a lot

drugs drugs are dangerous things which people eat or smoke or put into their bodies

energy we need energy to make cars and lights work. We also say that people who are full of life have lots of energy

fun having fun is having a good time

hit a record which a lot of people buy

instrument something you use to make musical sounds: the guitar is an instrument

live live music is made at a concert or on TV with people watching, not music made just for a record

psychedelic psychedelic music tries to make people see colours and hear sounds in the same way that psychedelic drugs do

record a thin, round piece of plastic with music recorded on it

serious something important which you need to think about more carefully. Serious things are not just for fun

single a record with only one song on each side

sound the sound is what you hear when you listen to music

ugly not beautiful

wore past tense of 'to wear'



FORTY YEARS OF POP

In 1956, a young man called Elvis Presley made a record that changed the history of music. Where he started, others followed: Bob Dylan and The Beatles, Madonna and Nirvana. This book looks at the way pop music has changed and grown over the last forty years.

OXFORD BOOKWORMS FACTFILES give important and interesting information to the reader, moving enjoyably towards real reading in English. Each book has been carefully graded to help the learner.

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